# Right Start Newsletter

Elementary Edition March, 2007

## Differentiated Instruction

## Adapt teaching style to reach every student

Your goal is to teach so that every student in your class learns. Sometimes that means having to modify your lessons or the way you present them to accommodate students with special needs. It doesn't have to be a difficult task.

Here are a few suggestions:

**If a student has difficulty listening:**

- Provide a written outline of your lesson.
- Give short, simple explanations.
- Use flash cards.
- Have the student repeat your instructions aloud.

**If a student has trouble reading:**

- Allow the student extra time for reading.
- Hand out typed information using large fonts.
- Use visual aids as much as possible.

**If a student has difficulty writing legibly:**

- Plan writing lessons that include tracing letters on paper.
- Allow the student to type or record assignments.
- Show how to use graph paper to space letters and numbers evenly.
- Encourage shared note-taking.

**If a student has trouble spelling:**

- Teach mnemonic devices.
- Avoid penalizing the student too severely for spelling errors.
- Provide tactile aids—a box with sand to write in or magnetic letters.

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## Actively engage students who lack motivation

Unmotivated students rarely feel a strong connection to school. An important step to getting students connected to learning is getting them connected to the person who represents learning: you.

With the following strategies, you can restore a student's desire to be an active member of the learning community that is your classroom:

- Control proximity. Seat students who lack motivation closer to you. In the back of the classroom their attention is prone to wander or they can lapse into misbehavior. Simply change a few desks around. Just be sure to integrate these students with the others. Never separate them in such a way that what you are doing becomes obvious to the whole class.
- Keep a watchful eye. The sooner you spot a student who has drifted off, the quicker you can turn the situation around. When a student is focused anywhere but on the task at hand, ask to see the student's work. Smile and ask if you can help. Provide some pointers. You've just sent a huge message: My teacher notices me and cares about me.
- Encourage attention. Yes, that's easier said than done. But remember that not knowing what's going on gives many students a "cover" for their poor performance.
  Try some pointed statements such as, "You all need to listen now," stopping near the desks of those students who need this message the most. But add, "If anyone has questions or needs extra help after I explain this, just raise your hand or come to my desk and I'll help you figure it out."

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## Work through math with 'think-alouds'

Working through math problems can be daunting for some students. Too many steps and numbers can be confusing. Try using "think-alouds." And it's as easy as it sounds: Students think aloud.

Model think-alouds for your students with things you do everyday—posting papers on a bulletin board or separating students into groups for an activity. Any time you have to complete a task that involves steps and numbers, think aloud so that students can follow your train of thought.

Verbalizing your thought process allows students to solve a problem along with you. They might even beat you to the solution!

Try it out with these topics:

- Elapsed time. Think aloud the number of minutes in a class period, a school day or week.
- Money. Think aloud how much money is needed to buy lunch for two days or one week.
- Measurements. Think aloud how many feet wide your classroom is or how many inches high the board is.

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http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3584.

## REMINDER

**Keep your professional folder up to date! Your next principal observation should be completed by April 13, 2007.**

| Documents That Should Be Included For First Year (BT1) Teachers |
|---|
| **Mentor Log** |
| **FODA 1- Sept. 30th Observation 1** |
| **FODA 2- Jan. 15th Observation 2** |
| **FODA 3-April 15th Observation 3** |
| **Teacher (Peer) Evaluation** |
| **Summative Evaluation -April** |
| **IGP for Year 1** |
| **Transcript from Professional Development Site (minimum of 2 CEU's)** |

**REMINDER**

**The 10 month payroll cycle for the 2006-07 school year is August 31, 2006 through May 31, 2007 even though the 2006-07 employment term is August 21, 2006 through June 15, 2007. To provide employees with a full check each month, it is necessary to pre-pay employees. Unless you chose the 12 month salary option or you work in a**

**school that has an alternate school calendar, your last payroll check for the 2006-07 school year will be May 31st, even though you are required to work days in June to complete the 10 month employment term. We thought this might be a helpful reminder as you budget for the coming months.**

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**Vernita Hill, Lateral Entry Coach**

**Induction Support Coaches**

| | |
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